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OBSERVATIONS  
ON  
THE ARMED STRENGTH  
OF  
CANADA.

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# OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

## ARMED STRENGTH OF CANADA.

“There was a sort of local force called the Urban Militia “much neglected indeed, and more a name than a reality, “yet the advantage of such an institution was considerable, men were to be had in abundance and as the “greatest difficulty in a sudden crisis is to prepare the “framework of order, it was no small resource to find a “plan of service ready, the principle of which was understood by the people.” (Napier “Peninsular war,” Vol. I, page 44, quotation from “Historia de la guerra contra Napoleone”).

A new phase has now developed in the military organization of Nations.

The defence of vital interests of peoples is no more entrusted only to standing armies; whole populations in our days, arm themselves to protect their rights.

Standing armies have become rather, Military Schools of Nations; means of imparting instruction to the able bodied men of countries; armies in which recruits serve for a more or less prolonged period returning afterwards to their civil avocations, trained soldiers ready to rejoin their corps when the Commonwealth is imperiled.

Prussia gave the lead in the adoption of this system and since her marvelous success in 1866 and in 1870, other nations of Europe have been striving to follow her example, so far as was consistent with their national character, institutions and prejudices.

Canada though a young country and relatively safe from the enterprises of ambitious neighbours, acknowledged in a manner, the value of national armies even before they had been tested on European battle fields and in 1868, a law was enacted by the Canadian Parliament,

embodying to an extent the principles of National Military Organizations, that is to say:—The ballot and general liability to military service with few exceptions in time of war;\*—Short term of service in embodied troops (much too short in fact for any practical result); and —Localization of corps with the linking of Service and Reserve Militia.

But though the importance of the above principles was fully appreciated by our legislators and statesmen, still in the same statute and perhaps from the best motives, they rendered nugatory the most important *provisos* of their legislation, in allowing Volunteer and Regular Militia *concurrently* to exist.

### §

The Volunteers have always patriotically performed their duty as far as it laid in their power to do so. But we contend that in being the cause of preventing the organization of Regular Militia, they have deprived the country of what would have been a much more efficient military force.

Their assumption, of an *amateur* kind of military service, only to gratify in not a few cases, a fancy for display and uniform, has taken from a soldier's duty in Canada, its reality and serious character and prevented its performance from being acknowledged by the mass of the people, as part of a citizen's obligations to the State. Hence, the popular saying, that *volunteers are playing at soldiers*, and the result; that sense of duty as regards military liabilities has not been developed amongst our countrymen.

Enlistments in the Volunteers being generally procured (except perhaps in cases of emergency), by solicitations, or the popularity, real or spurious, of Commanders of Corps, men enlisting under such circumstances, feel they are thereby granting a favor to their own officers and therefore exact privileges and indulgences far from conducive to discipline and efficiency, whilst a lack of energy and firmness in leaders, is a source of insubordination. Often also ignorance and neglect of the duties and liabilities of their position destroys the prestige of commanders amongst the rank and file.

Thus, though Volunteers (the best of them) superficially appear to be trust worthy, still are they deficient in the thorough training and

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\* Substitutes are however allowed in time of war with certain conditions and restrictions and an indemnity of \$30, liberates individuals from service, in time of peace.

discipline that bind men together in disaster as in success and secure decisive and permanent military advantages. Nor have Volunteer Officers the instruction and professional acquirements obligatory to their responsible positions, civil avocations have interfered with their joining such Military Schools as existed and as it was felt that enforced attendance would perhaps bring on their resignation, and the consequent disorganization of corps, which it was thought desirable to bolster up, the requisite professional knowledge and qualifications were not exacted and things allowed to *slide*.

§

Notwithstanding this sacrificing the interests of State to personal convenience for the sake of at least securing efficiency in point of numbers, still is the Volunteer force shortcoming both in officers and men, and the gradual falling off since 1872-73, in the number of those who volunteer, has obliged Government to reduce the establishments of Infantry and Cavalry corps by over *one fifth*.

Instead of this reduction taking place, corps unable to maintain their strength with volunteers should have been recruited by ballot, or disbanded and Regular Militia formed to replace them and keep up the total to at least 43,000 men, as provided by Statute.

§

To study the organization of the Force, brings strongly to mind, how slightly the judicious exercise of authority, has guided the good will of those who, since 1868, have voluntarily assumed the duties of military service. It is difficult to understand what could have induced, to allow such hap-hazard organization as the present, to proceed unhindered. Was it through ignorance of the resources of the several sections of the country, in men, &c., of their topography, military features, and probable mode of defence, or was it through a steady purpose to not oppose the will or even the caprice of the people? Whatever may have been the cause, the effect is that corps have been organized not in obedience to sound military principles, but to the impulse of the moment apparently, to suit personal fancy, or from even less plausible motives.

The usual proportions of the different arms to one another have been disregarded. Cavalry that constitutes generally 1-6 of an army, stands in Ontario as 1-14, in Quebec as 1-20, in New-Brunswick as 1-7, whilst Nova-Scotia has *one* troop of cavalry!



For field artillery the proportion is 3 guns sometimes 4 and towards the end of great wars and with inferior troops, 5 guns per thousand men. Viewing the case in its most favorable light, we find the force in Ontario requires 60 guns instead of the 40 provided, in Quebec 42 instead of 16, in New-Brunswick 12 instead of 8 and in Nova-Scotia at least 12 instead of 6.

Garrison Artillery to be efficient must be perfectly acquainted with the localities to defend ; with this object, Batteries should be organized in those places where they would have to fight. The importance and extent of the Fortresses to be garrisoned in time of war, would determine the number to be organized.

Omitting points of minor importance liable to attack, it seems that large harbours and cities such as Hamilton, Toronto, Kingston, Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec, are inadequately provided in this respect. Hamilton has not a single Battery of Garrison Artillery, Kingston has only the permanent Battery stationed there, Toronto one, Ottawa none, Montreal six, Quebec only three including a permanent Battery in connection with the Gunnery School.

The greater part of the Garrison Artillery organization, has been concentrated in the Maritime Provinces, as if the Lake shores were less liable to attack than our Sea coast, and all the Garrison Artillery corps put together actually muster a little over 2000 men of all ranks. This force is expected to undertake the Artillery Defence of six important cities of which two are large fortresses ; not mentioning other towns, forts and harbours, that would have to be defended with heavy artillery.

To supply garrisons at threatened points, men could not at the last moment, be transferred hundreds of miles, from one end of the country to the other, arriving in a strange locality, unacquainted with the armament, resources, &c., a most undesirable state of affairs, yet naturally to be expected.

### §

The Dominion having no standing army,\* to provide means of instruction for the population, the militia should in a measure have replaced it—Over 40,000 recruits could have passed through its ranks, every second or third year,—men very imperfectly trained it is true:

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\* Two permanent Batteries are in existence, they are schools of instruction for the Militia Artillery.

even with the maximum period of 16 days drill a year, yet systematically.

Our present military organization exists since 1868; if it had worked properly we should now have over 100,000 available men, with some knowledge of military duty— whilst; judging from the military returns of 1873, when only 9000 had performed a full term of service instead of a possible 40,000, the number of trained men must be considerably under the 100,000 that could reasonably have been expected.

Moreover the Volunteers having no instructors, the training given has been of a very inferior kind. Military schools were established to supply instructors but gave little satisfaction. Cadets were allowed indiscriminately to join the schools, many of whom after having obtained certificates of qualification, ceased to belong, if they ever did, to volunteer corps and pocketing the government allowance, remained afterwards quietly at home, or left the country.

Judging from the following quotation, of a report to the Adjutant General from one of the District Staff, the course followed in the schools had not the required scope and their organization was inefficient—  
“ After the departure of the regulars, the school of Military Instruction at this station (Quebec) was placed in the hands of the Militia Staff  
“ ..... I consider the Government bounty for certificates could be applied in a manner more beneficial to the country..... by having  
“ cadets..... put in barracks under proper officers..... as if they  
“ were enrolled soldiers. This would give them a sound practical  
“ knowledge of interior economy and military rule and administration  
“ ..... under the present system they can acquire but a very limited  
“ and merely theoretical knowledge.” \*

Eventually, the military schools were abolished and there are at present, no means of training Cavalry or Infantry Instructors. Volunteer Boards had till the closing of the schools, given certificates concurrently with the latter; they now grant them all except for the Artillery. Little can be said in favor of the Boards, the examinations they carry on are superficial and the Members, not always qualified to test the merits of candidates.

Even with the low standard of efficiency required, a large number of provisionally appointed Volunteer officers † have not qualified; 9 out of 15 combatant officers of the 29th Battalion and 9 out of 16 in the

\* Militia Report 1872, page LXXXI.

† Some provisional appointments date from 1866.

24th Battalion of No. 1 Military District, are without certificates—similar instances are to be met with in all the other Military Districts.

Two Gunnery Schools exist since several years, they are reported as very beneficial to the artillery, but the number of militia men allowed to attend is very limited and relatively few officers have availed themselves of this opportunity of learning their duties.

With no proper means of instruction, the Force has steadily deteriorated and after ten years of the present *régime* and many millions spent, it is now certainly inferior to what it was the first years of its formation.

Abandoning the system of camps, was very detrimental, camps have always had the best results for discipline and the development of military spirit; men camping are more under control; no mere parade drills need be practiced there, but fighting tactics instead, for which all facilities are usually at hand. Interior economy is practically taught and Regimental staffs grounded in their work. Senior officers learn to command large tactical bodies. The administrative branches of the service, are put to a practical test and their short comings brought to light. Those are acknowledged advantages of Instructional camps.

For the sake of an ill-conceived economy and again, to suit personal convenience, the Volunteers are allowed to perform their annual drills at their respective Head quarters, instead of going into camp. They muster usually at night, in drill sheds, and from want of space, they practice only a few parade movements. City corps have been rather conspicuous in avoiding camps, though some of them have made praiseworthy efforts to continue the system, incurring even heavy personal expense for that purpose. Militia camps were formed all over the country in 1872; they have since gradually been discontinued.

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Legislature had important objects in dividing the country, for military purposes, into Districts, Brigade, Regimental, and Company Divisions—Firstly: to equalize the burden of defence, by giving each section a share proportional to its population liable to military service.—Secondly: that each military district should form a large tactical and administrative body, possessing at all times resources in men, armament, equipment, &c., sufficient to form a force equivalent to a strong division, which should necessarily have comprised all arms in



its organization and been provided with reserves to keep it up to strength and increase it if necessary.

Thus: Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4 should on an emergency have easily mustered eight Brigades from a contingent of over 100,000 men of the 1st class—Districts 5, 6 and 7, six Brigades from a contingent of 60 or 70,000—Districts 8 and 9, five Brigades from a contingent of 50,000. Forming Divisions each of two Brigades of 3 Battalions each and an extra Battalion of Rifles, 1 Regiment of Cavalry, 3 Batteries of Field Artillery and 1 company of Engineers. (This, of course, is an abstract organization which could be altered to suit the nature of the country, the service to be performed, &c., but to be adhered to as closely as possible.) Leaving in reserve, to fill up casualties, &c., a general contingent of 100,000 men of the 1st class, 37,000 of the 2nd, 304,000 of the 3rd and 159,000 of the 4th. \*

In conjunction and well linked with this force—for recruiting purposes, at least—the Reserve Militia, organized by officers appointed in Company and Regimental Divisions would have been the depot from which recruits could have been drafted into the linked Service Corps, and if instead of virtually exempting from further service, men who had belonged to the regular militia, their term of duty of two or three years had been extended to 4 or 6 years, two or more of which in the active force and the remainder in the Reserve, still liable to be called out if necessary for service in the corps they had previously joined, the so-called Reserve militia would have become a real and trained reserve.

This is what should have been, not what is.

We observe for instance that the proportion of Active militiamen to be furnished by No 1 military District is 7100 of a total of 43,000 for the Dominion. From the militia list corrected to August 1878, there appears to be of organized corps, in the District: 4 troops of Cavalry (232), 2 Batteries of Field Artillery (156), 79 companies of Infantry (4982), total of all arms with, say, 70 Regimental Staff Officers, 5440; leaving a deficiency of nearly *one fourth*.

This District, properly organized, should have 5 Field Batteries instead of 2, about 1100 Cavalry instead of 232, Infantry, 5600 instead of 4900 and 1 Engineer Company. The quota (7100), if it were only

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\* Those numbers are taken from the latest Reserve Militia enrolment returns (1873), the actual numbers, with the steady increase of our population, must now be larger.

to equalize the burden of military duty, should be distributed approximately as follows :

County of Essex .....	450	East Riding Elgin.....	320
“ Kent.....	350	North Riding Middlessex.....	300
“ Lambton .....	460	West “ “ .....	250
“ Bothwell.....	260	East “ “ .....	350
London (city) .....	320	North “ Oxford .....	310

and so on for the remainder of the district.

But we find that Essex does but furnish 40 or 50 Militiaman, that two companies of the so called, “Kent” battallion muster men in the county of Bothwell, that Bothwell has no militia organization of its own, and, to particularize no further, that London has an excess of 200 militia above its legitimate quota.

The same state of affairs exists in the other Districts. During peace no serious results follow, except that large sections are deprived of all occasions of acquiring military training, whilst others have more than they can improve. But at the outbreak of hostilities, when it would be necessary to raise the establishments to war footing and later on to provide for casualties at the rate of, say, 75 per cent, per annum. it is a matter of doubt whether, for instance, the good people of London would think it just, that recruits should be drawn exclusively from their city, to keep up the strength of the volunteer corps they have been allowed to organize, while other parts of Ontario remained set free. There would possibly be no alternative but to recruit elsewhere, perhaps at a distance so as not to interfere with other organizations, and as the case would not be singular, one may imagine the confusion and difficulties arising from recruits hurrying from all points of the compass, to join bodies of troops in which they would find themselves perfect strangers, under officers they would not know and in whom they could not presumably at first have much confidence. Instead of a Force ready to face an invader, disorganized masses would be at hand which it would take weeks, perhaps months to bring into shape-- moreover, what in an army of the nature of ours. replaces *esprit de corps* that is: *Esprit de clocher* in the good sense of it, would be destroyed with the other advantages to be derived from the territorial division of our armed strength.

And if, as it is to be hoped, action were ever taken to secure as a *trained Reserve*, those who had served in the active militia, with what greater force would not our remarks bear, on the objectionable features of the present hap-hazard organization.

The advantage of localization as regards reserves, has been made so apparent by comparatively recent facts familiar to all, that it is useless to enlarge.

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Threatening danger would undoubtedly bring recruits in flocks, to fill up the ranks; but this impetus would soon relax, when the enthusiasts having been absorbed, would have disappeared in the strife. War can not now be fed by such effervescence, its preparation must be the result of calm and steady organization, in which, if necessary, all the resources of the nation in men, material, &c., can be utilized. Those are the true principles upon which rests the armed strength of nations, in our days.

The Canadian Militia system, imperfect as it is in many respects, possesses however the essentials that can produce a sound and useful military organization. It requires to be improved but firstly and especially, to be properly applied.

The primary measures to be taken are :—The disbandment of the Volunteer force and the enforcement of the ballot.—The formation of a certain number of Regular troops as Schools of Instruction to train Militia officers and men and to maintain order when called out in aid of civil power.—Extension of the period of service, half of the term in the Active Militia, the remainder in the Reserve, liable to be called out to rejoin service corps\*.—Reduction in the rate of pay, the rank and file being mostly (un-married) balloted from the 1st class, a lesser pay would be sufficient, this would allow of a longer period of annual training; the present one of 16 days is too short for any practical purpose.—A higher rate of pay and longer period of training for the Cavalry, both branches of the Artillery service and the Engineers, their duties and drills being more onerous and difficult to learn than those of the Infantry.—Militia corps localized so as to link well with the reserves of the territorial divisions to which the different corps would be affected.—Establishment of complete and sufficient depots of arms, accoutrements, clothing, harness, camping equipment, etc; at favorable points along Railways or other convenient lines of

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\* With this system of reserves, an armed Force of about 80,000 partially trained men would always be available half of which would cost nothing except when called out for service. This could allow perhaps the service militia to be reduced without weakening the defensive power of the country.

communication, under proper care.—Decentralization in matters of administration and of command.—Divisional organization of the force carried out in accordance with approved military principles, not only in view of occupying and defending a portion of country within our own frontier, but of acting offensively if necessary. Offensive Strategy and defensive Tactics often advantageously combine for a successful defence.

The following should express the Government policy on the above points :

*Et mihi res, non me rebus subjungere conor.*